

**SAINT PETER
THE HEAD OF
THE APOSTLES
IN THE SYRIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
OF ANTIOCH**

By

**HIS HOLINESS MOR IGNATIUS ZAKKA I
IWAS**

*Patriarch Of Antioch And All The East.
The Supreme Head Of The Universal Syrian
Orthodox Church.*

Translated

By

V. Rev. Fr. Zeki Zitoun

4-0-2

وَمِنْهَا رَكْعَتَانِ فِي الْبُحْرِ وَرَكْعَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ

Beth Hardutho Library

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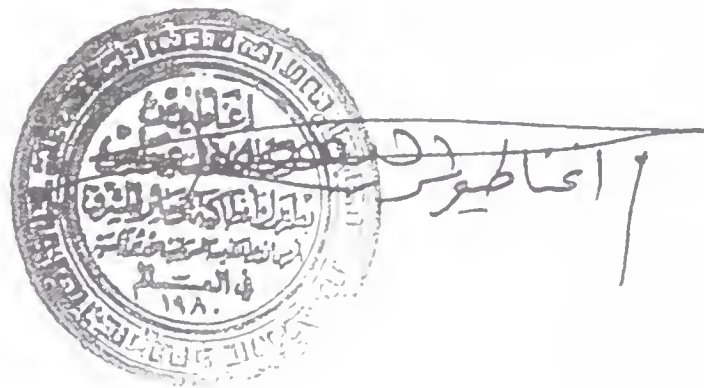
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Approved to be printed



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THE SUCCESSOR OF SAINT PETER
H. H. MORAN MOR IGNATIUS ZAKKA I WAS
PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST



*Simon Peter answered and said,
"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you,
Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not
revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven".
(matthew 16:16-17)*

INTRODUCTION

He is Simon Peter, one of the twelve apostles of the Lord Christ and one of the famous personalities of the Holy Bible. He was and is a controversial figure to the scholars and commentators of the Holy Bible, as well as to the historians and theologians of the Church. Some of them pay him great tributes, highlighting his famous confession in Jesus Christ, saying: "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" (Matthew 16:16). He was worthy to be extolled and to be given a blessing by the Lord Jesus Christ, the reason on which they rely, to place Peter in his appropriate position in the Church, not forgetting his part in its foundation and advancement, and opening its doors to all nations. He is the hero who was entitled by the Lord Jesus to act the most important part in the Kingdom of God on earth. His, will be the notability in the kingdom in heaven as he is the chief of the apostles of the Lord Jesus and their valorous head.

Some of them reluctant to pay him even the smallest tributes and they enlarge his errors which had only arisen from human feebleness. A major reason is denying his Lord in the front of a maid in the house of the high priest, on the night of the Lord Jesus' trial. They forget, or pretend to forget his sincere repentance, which made him the living example for the sincere repentant and opened both leaves of the door of repentance before the repentant sinners. It enlightened the darkness of their hearts with the non-frustrated hope in the abundant mercy of God and to return them to the rank of children.

In our research, we set forth honestly and absolutely before the reader, the truths obtained from the Holy Gospel, the rest of the New Testament Scriptures and the teachings of the illustrious fathers of

the Syrian Church. We study the biography of Peter the Apostle, through the life of the Lord Jesus on earth as well as the writings about Him by the scholars of our church - particularly in the ecclesiastical rite.

THE MEANING OF HIS NAME

He is Simon Son of Jonah, known as Kipho, meaning Peter. The translation of Simon in Aramaic-Syriac (Shemoon) is “the listener”, the submissive and obedient. Jonah, in Syriac means Dove. Our Lord Jesus called him Kipho, which is a Syriac word meaning the stone or pillar. When translated into Greek it became Petros, and in Arabic it became Botrous.

HIS HOMELAND

Simon Peter was from the village of Bethsaida located on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (Gennesaret) in Galilee. He resided in Capernaum. It is mentioned in the Holy Gospel, that the Lord Jesus entered Capernaum accompanied by his disciples; **now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. (Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39).** Simon Peter was married and had a daughter.

HIS OCCUPATION

Simon was a fisherman. He and his brother Andrew owned a boat in the Sea of Galilee. They did not live in poverty as some people think.

HIS EDUCATION

Simon was not a scholar among the scholars of the law. He did not have a religious rank, he was not a priest or a Levite, and he was not a Scribe or a Pharisee. It is said, that he was illiterate. But like the majority of his contemporaries at that time, was acquainted with the Syriac-Aramaic language which was spoken by the children of his tribe, as it is confirmed in the Ecclesiastical History, by the great historian Eusabius of Caesaria +340 AD. Simon, since his childhood was taught the principles of the law at the synagogue school of his village.

A MEMBER IN THE EXPECTATORS COMMUNITY

Simon was not satisfied with what he had learned in his childhood under the teachers of the law. Together with his brother Andrew, he joined the group of expectators - the Jews who penetrated deeply into the study of the prophecies concerning the coming of (Messiah) Christ the expected Saviour. They did expect the fulfillment of these prophecies in their generation, but their idea of the Salvation was mere material.

DISCIPLE UNDER JOHN THE BAPTIST



In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:1-2). John started to baptise all those who were coming to him. Many repented through him and some became disciples under him. From among them both Simon and his brother Andrew who did not quit their occupation and remained in fishing, and from time to time were approaching John the Baptist to hear his teachings.

DISCIPLE UNDER THE LORD JESUS

Simon heard the testimony of John the Baptist about the Lord Jesus, that he is the Christ. John Said: **“there comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”** (Mark 1:7-8). We do not know



whether Simon saw Jesus being baptised by his servant John or not, but we do know, that: **...after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”** (Mark 1:14-15) - and that Andrew did meet the Lord Jesus and believed in him. Then he came to his brother Simon announcing and saying, **“We have found the Messiah”**

(which is translated, the Christ).

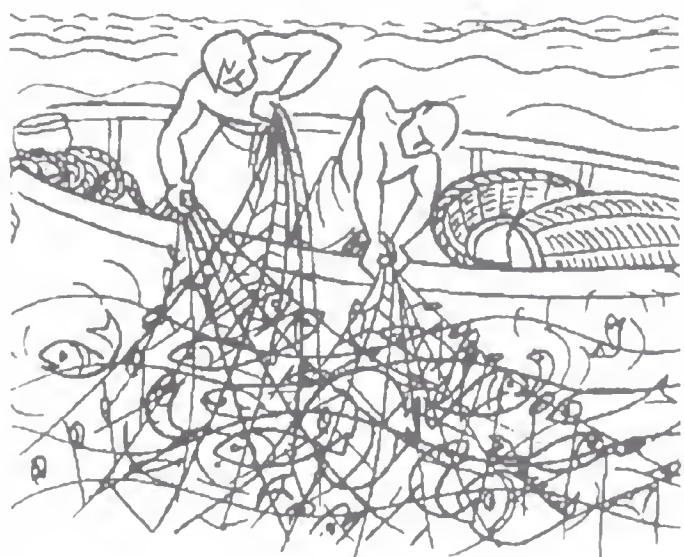
Andrew brought his brother Simon to the Lord Jesus, perhaps Simon kneeled before the Lord joyfully, and the Lord told him, you are Simon Son of Jonah, you will be called (Kipho)- Peter. Simon loved the Lord Christ and considered Him his new Teacher. He started together with his brother Andrew to go to him to hear his teachings and witness his miracles. At the same time they were practicing fishing as their occupation. The call of the Lord to Peter to be His Apostle was like His call to all His apostles. The Lord is first acquainted with the disciple, then calls him. The disciple answers the call, and accompanies the Lord for a certain time without leaving his profession. After regular visits to the Lord and listening to His teachings, the seed of the Gospel grows in his heart and he becomes prepared to dedicate himself to the Gospel. The Lord calls him again, he leaves everything and follows him. In the following we



find how the Lord called Simon for discipleship. It once happened that, the multitude pressed about Him {Jesus} to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them

and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the

net.” And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.” So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him. (Luke 5:1-11). Both Matthew and Mark mentioned in their Gospels, that the Lord said to Simon and his brother Andrew

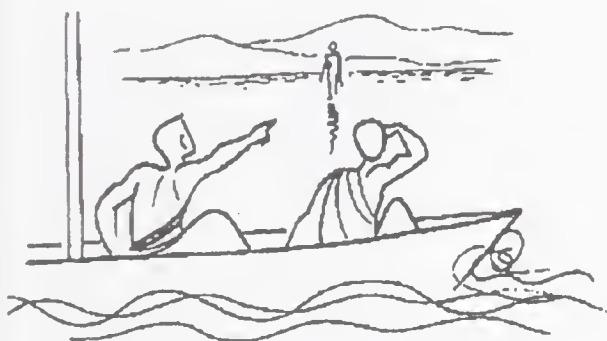


"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him (Matthew 4:19-20, Mark 1: 16-18).

That was how Simon joined the disciples of the Lord Jesus. Afterwards he was elected to be among the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:2) and in this regard Luke the preacher writes the following: **Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew...** (Luke 6:12-14).

The believer, while praying contemplates in the incident of the call of the Lord Jesus to Simon Peter to be his disciple, he says in Syriac¹:

ܡܨܕܡ ܡܚܠܐ ܒܡܬܐ ܡܨܠܐ ܕܐܝܬܐ ܕܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ
 ܕܡܨܢܐ ܕܡܨܢܐ: ܐܠܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ
 ܐܡܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ ܡܨܢܐ
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Its translation is: "While Simon Peter was fishing in the sea, his Lord called him: 'Come Simon, I will give you the spiritual catch to draw men from death to life. On you, Simon, I will build the Holy Church, and the bars of Sheol shall not be able to prevail against it'"

PETER'S WALK ON THE WATER

It happened one evening, that Jesus was praying alone on the mountain, and the disciples were on the boat in the Sea of Galilee (or Gennesaret). The sea agitated and surged, the wind was very strong and the furious waves were hurling the boat trying to swallow it. The disciples struggled with the gale till the first three hours, with which the morning starts. When Jesus saw them troubled and surrounded by danger, he descended from the mountain and walked on the sea, as if He was on dry land, and went to them. When they saw him, they were terrified. **"It is a ghost"**, they said, and cried

¹ Sh'heemo, the book of the common prayer, according to the Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. Printed in Jerusalem 1936, P. 141, the second gaumo of Thursday night, in tune of (Moryo Moran)



out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: **“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”** And Peter answered Him and said, **“Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”** So He said, **“Come.”** And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, **“Lord, save me!”** And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, **“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”** And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, **“Truly You are the Son of God.”** (Matthew 14:27-33). In this incident Peter tried to imitate his Lord, by walking on the water. When the Lord told him to come, he was encouraged, and with great valour got down into the water. At first he succeeded in walking on the water towards the Lord, but he was beset by doubts which appeared out of his speech with the Lord, when he said: **“if it is You”**, after he had heard from the Lord his saying: **“It is I; do not be afraid”**. When he started walking on the water looking to Jesus, he did not sink, but as he moved his sight away from the Lord to himself and saw the strength of the waves, he was terrified. He started to sink, and his knowledge of swimming did not help him in that gale, so he cried out saying: **“Lord, save me!”** And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, then he rebuked him saying: **“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”** The wind calmed as soon as the Lord climbed into the boat. Immediately the boat landed at Gennesaret, to where they were facing.

SIMON'S CONFESSION IN THE DIVINITY OF THE LORD JESUS

From among the most important incidents in the biography of Simon, in accompanying the Lord Jesus for a period of three years, is the moment in which he confessed the divinity of the Lord Jesus, declaring that he is **“The Christ, the Son of the living God.”**



This event occurred near Caesarea Philippi where the Lord Jesus **was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him (Luke 9:18)**. He used to pray in private to be alone with his heavenly Father, before taking a decisive decision. At this time also, after praying he took advantage of being alone with his apostles and asked them saying, **“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matthew 16:13)**. As usual, his question was not an act of inquiring, but for the benefit of those who are asked. He asked them to take into consideration a very important matter, which is, the opinion of people of him as the Son of Man, because the common people see Him not, but as a man. The disciples answered that people are bewildered regarding him. **“Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” (Matthew 16:14)**. That is to say, one of the old prophets has been raised from the dead. In their tradition a prophet will rise from the dead, (possibly Jeremiah), before the coming of the expected Messiah. He will show the tabernacle, which contains the Manna, the rod of Aaron, and both tablets of testimony, which was concealed in the mountain by Jeremiah to appear just before the coming of Christ. This is why, they said the Lord Jesus is the prophet who will appear before the coming of

Christ. Very few of them were saying that he is the expected Christ. Because his good works, humbleness and meekness were not compatible with the material portrait which was impressed in their minds about Christ, whom they are waiting for, as it was illustrated to them by their chiefs in their crooked teachings and erroneous interpretations of the prophecies.

The question of the Lord to his disciples about the opinion of people concerning himself, was a preface for his more important question, of what do his apostles think of him, after being his disciples for a period of almost two and a half years. He asked them saying: **“But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)**. Like the majority of the people, they were throughout their lives, holding fast to the worldly political hopes of the coming of Christ. It was very difficult to give up suddenly these opinions... And in such critical moments, man shall decide in a prompt manner, otherwise, will lose the battle and fail in the examination. The courageous Simon stepped forward to represent his comrades voluntarily, as he did in some other incidents - either because Jesus looked at him charging him to answer for the others and for himself, or, that his friends asked him to represent them in the answer. The importance of the incident is that he passed the examination with brilliant success, when he said to the Lord, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16)**.

The question that the Lord asked was, what they thought of him, as the Son of Man (Matthew 16:13). The answer was, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16)**. Both statements concerning Jesus Christ are true, in spite of their apparent contradiction. The union of the divinity and the humanity in the one Christ allows us to give him these two attributes at the same time.

He is the Son of God and the Son of Man in his one person, one nature and one will.

Demons previously confessed the divinity of the Lord Christ (Matthew 8:29, Mark 3:11 & Luke 14:14). Likewise Nathanael (John 1:14) and Peter himself formerly answered these utterances (John 6:19). However, the Lord showed the greatness of Peter's answer at this time, in that he was worthy to receive a revelation from heaven and respond to it. This was the reason for which Jesus replied saying: **“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”** (Matthew 16:17). Heaven declared this faith true, and it became an irrefutable dogma and immovable foundation of the Holy Church. The Lord then said to Simon: **“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”** (Matthew 16:18-19).

THE EXPLANATION OF THE UTTERANCE PETER (KIPHO)

The Lord called Simon "Kipho", this Syriac utterance has two meanings, and it means a stone cut of a large stone or part of a rock. It has been translated into Greek as Petros and it is in a masculine form. The ancients used to translate the names into the language, which they speak. The Apostle Paul who wrote in Greek called Simon, sometimes "Peter" and sometime "Kipho" (Gal. 2:7&8). But the second meaning of "Kipho" is the rock which is firm at its spiritual place, and in this meaning it has been translated into Greek and became PETRA, in a feminine form. In the verse the Lord

addressed to Simon Peter, it became similar to the firm dogma of the faith, which Simon pronounced when he said to the Lord **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”**. The Church is established on a sublime principle, pronounced by a faithful man who is Simon Peter, whom for his faith and response to the divine revelation was worthy to be called "KIPHO".

THE LORD CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH



Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20). Therefore, the Church is built on Christ who is its foundation and the cornerstone in it. For who is God, except the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? (2 Samuel 22:32). Saint Paul the Apostle said: For no other foundation can anyone lay than that

which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11). The Apostle Peter calls Jesus, the cornerstone, saying: The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. (1 Peter 2:7).

In this meaning, every Saturday morning², the prayer chants saying:

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חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד
וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד חַסֵּד

² Sh'heerno, printed in Jerusalem 1936 P.225.

19

Its translation is: "The rock, which poured, forth rivers in the wilderness, clearly indicates to you, O, holy Virgin. For from you had shone in the world the Son of God, who is the real rock, as Paul the apostle said.

Therefore the principle and the first foundation of the Church is Jesus himself who is Him yesterday, today and forever, the Living One who gives life to the Church and the immovable rock. Paul the apostle says: **Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).** The Church cannot be built but on the person of Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus speaks as a builder, in his saying: **"I will build My church"**, He means that he will build it upon a spiritual principle, because the Church is a spiritual building. The spiritual foundation is the authenticity of the incarnation, which is declared in both phrases **"The Son of Man"** and **"The Son of the Living God"**. When the fathers of the Church also mentioned the Apostle Peter as a foundation in the Church, it is because he declared the reality of the Divine Incarnation, and receiving the power of being as a stone in the foundation of the Church and the corner stone in it. In regards to this, the scholar Bar-Slaibee +1171 AD, said: "That the Lord did not mean by the rock the person of Peter, but the true confession and faith in Him. On the faith with which you confessed, I the natural Son of the Father, will build my Church". And the Lord Christ elucidates the reason for which he blessed Simon and called him "Kipho", namely Peter, "the stone", by saying to Simon: **"flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,**

but **My Father who is in heaven.**" (Matthew 16:17). Therefore, the declaration is heavenly to which Simon was submitted, and he became the mediator by which it was spread. Sometimes, the fathers associate the rest of the apostles with Peter considering them a foundation in the Church. It is written in the prayer of Tuesday evening, in the Sh'heemo³ (the book of the Common Prayer), the following:

ܕܢܝܢ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܩܨܕܐ ܐܬܝܐܝܬܐ. .
ܐܡܡܐ ܕܐܡܬܐ ܒܚܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ. ܐܡܡܐ ܕܐܡܬܐ ܡܬܒܥܐ. ܐܡܬܐ
ܐܡܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܒܥܐ. ܐܡܐ ܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܐܡܬܐ.
ܡܠܬܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ. ❖

Its translation is: "Blessed is (Christ) he, who built the holy Church on the palm of his hand⁴, and placed the prophets apostles and holy martyrs as its foundation, and gathered and filled it with all peoples and they praise in it day and night".

In the same meaning is written in the prayer of Tuesday morning⁵, the following:

ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܠܐ ܩܨܕܐ ܐܬܝܐܝܬܐ. . ܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ
ܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ. ܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ
ܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ
ܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ ܕܡܬܒܥܐ. ❖

³ Sh'heemo P.53.
⁴ This comprising the Lord's promise in the Book of Isaiah: "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me" [Is. 49:16]
⁵ Sh'heemo P.73.

Its translation is: "Glory be to Christ, who built the holy Church on the palm of his hands and set up the altar in it, and put in it treasures-the prophets, apostles and holy martyrs, who triumphed and were crowned, Hallelujah and Hallelujah. Blessed is he who built his Church and set up an altar in it".

And in the prayer of Saturday morning⁶ the following is written:

حلا وُ. طافا وحده مصدوم. ومع الحصة حيا ايا
ولا وُ. ملا ايا حبا حله واما. لونه حد كحلا مصعقلا
ولا الادوية واما حد حصي بصله; حيا ٥٥٥
مصدق ٥٥٥

Its translation is: The Church said: "On the rock of the company of Simon the chief of the disciples, I am built and I am not afraid. The waves and tempests beat against me but they do not shake me, the accursed Nestorius fought against me and met with a fall".

In this stanza, we feel the equal share of the apostles in the Church building. But in other stanzas, the fathers declare that Peter is its foundation.

It is written in the prayer of Friday morning⁷, the following:

حلا، وحيي حبالا لله وا مضي. حلكا، حاصلا
مع حبا لله. مضم، ماضا، ماضا، ماضا، ماضا.
مضي، وحب ماضا، ماضا، ماضا، ماضا، ماضا
مضا. ❖

⁶ Sh'heemo P.73.


⁷ Sh'heemo P.226

حالا مقدم، حالا من، حالا حالا. حالا محدد
 ها، و خُصه و امامیه. مع لهذا، و منزه و هذا و هذا، و حالا
 و حالا حده، و هذا محدد، و حسی، و حالا امامیه
 مدحی

Its translation is: "At your doors, O Church, watchers stand by day and night, and guard you from the evil one; Simon the foundation, Paul the architect and John the friend of the Bridegroom, Hallelujah, and David the harp of the Holy Spirit".

"Our Lord built His Church on Simon Kipho, and set it up on seventy two pillars. It is higher and loftier than the mountain of Cardu; the Architect, who built it, has his dwelling on high, Hallelujah, blessed is He who built His Church and set up an altar in it".

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN



It was not sufficient for the Lord Jesus to give the name “Keepho”, or Peter to Simon, but granted him alone spiritual authority by saying to him: **“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19).** Keys are the sign of authority, and here is the authority of teaching, justifying and sanctifying. In the day of Pentecost, Peter opened the door of faith before the Jews. He was the first among the apostles of the Lord who preached to them, and when they were cut to the heart, they said to him and to other apostles, **“Men and**

brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (Acts 2:37-41). Peter, also opened the door of faith to the gentiles by converting in Caesarea the centurion Cornelius of the Italian Regiment and with him all his household, relatives and friends. He ordered that they shall be baptised in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48) and they were counted among the children of the kingdom. It is mentioned in the Morning Prayer of Saturday in the book Sh'heemo⁸ that is a collection of common prayers of the weak according to the Rite of the Syrian Church, as follows:

ܦܪܝ ܝܗܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܢ ܚܒ ܐܡܢ ܝܗܐ ܕܡܡܕܐ ܕܡܥܐ
 ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ

Its translation is: "How sweet was the voice of our Lord, when he talked to Simon the chief of the Apostles, concerning the priesthood, saying to him: 'I appointed you as my representative and I gave you

⁸ Printed in Jerusalem in the year 1936 P 236. The authors of the prayers of the Sh'heemo and its tunes are St. Ephraim (+373), St. Jacob of Seruge (+521), Isaac (363-418 AD), Balay bishop of Balash 5th century, Simon the Potter (+514) and was gathered by St. Jacob of Edessa at the end of the 7th century. See also Alooloo Almathour, Patriarch Afram Barsom I, Baghdad 1976 P 57.

the keys of heights and depth to bind and loose. If you bind I will bind also, if you loose, I will loose as well, and if you intercede for sinners your supplication will be granted’".

The scholar Mor Dionosius Jacob, son of Slayby bishop of Omid +1171 AD, said in commenting on the verse, **“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven”** that through Simon the Lord entitled that authority to all Orthodox priests.

The Lord of the keys, the absolute authority, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. As it has been said about him in the book of the prophet Isaiah: **I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open. (Isaiah 22:22).** And the book of Revelation says: **These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens. (Revelation 3:7).** Therefore, the comparison of the spiritual authority of the Church, with the authority of the Lord Jesus, is proportionally received from the absolute authority of the Lord Jesus. The Lord gave this authority to his disciple Peter separately and gave it to him again with the other apostles assembled. At this time the Lord was speaking about the forgiveness of sins, when he said: **“if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:15-18).**

The Lord Jesus gave to all his pure apostles, the authority of teaching, justifying and consecrating, that was prior to his ascension to heaven, by saying to them: **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:18-20).

About this, it is mentioned in the Morning Prayer of Monday⁹, as follows:

لاؤحدهن اهلقال. عيز من معه لاؤحدهن وحنه
 هه من اهل حهم. هه هه عاوا من ايقا. هاهه لالحه
 وحنه من ميه بصلهم موه حها ميه هه هه
 موه حها حه حه الا. وحنه هه حها حها
 حه ايقا حها وحنه هه هه. ميه حها حها
 حها هه حها هه حها حها حها حها
 وحنه ميه حها

Its translation is: "Our Lord Jesus sent twelve physicians to the four corners of the creation, and thus he said to them: Drive out devils from men and heal those who are sick; freely you received the gift, freely give of it".

“Glory to the Son of God, who has power on sea and land and chose simple men to be preachers; from the sea he chose Peter and from

⁹ Sh^hheemo P 40

middle of the road Paul, and made them preachers in the Holy Church".

In addition, the following is mentioned in Friday's¹⁰ Morning Prayer:

ܡܠܬܐ ܡܬܒܥܐ. ܚܬܐ ܐܐ ܡܡܝܬܐ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܬܐ ܠܐܘܕܐ ܒܥܡܐ.
ܕܐܡܝܢ ܐܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ܐܘܕܐ ܠܡܐ ܠܐ ܡܡܝܬܐ
ܚܝܬܐ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܘܕܐ ܠܡܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܡܥܠܐ ܠܡܡܝܬܐ ܐܘܕܐ ❖

Its translation is: "Holy apostles, preachers of the faith, who went forth like ploughmen over the earth, pray that the tares may be uprooted from among us, that the good seed may not be choked, Hallelujah, blessed is he who sowed his gospel from end to end of earth".

In Thursday's¹¹ early Morning Prayer, a supplication by the scholar St. Jacob of Seruge, in his soliloquy of the Church, says:

ܐܐ ܕܐܡܝܢ ܡܥ ܡܠܐ ܕܚܬܐ ܡܡܝܬܐ ܐܡܝܢ
ܕܐܡܝܢ ܚܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ
ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ܡܥ ܚܝܬܐ ❖

Its translation is: "Behold, I am persecuted on all sides, cries the Church; apostles of the Son help me by your prayers. When the Son

¹⁰ Sh'heemo PP 189-190
¹¹ Sh'heemo P 146

of God was taken up to him who sent him, he left you to me as strong fortresses which cannot be subdued".

In addition, the Church seeks refuge in all apostles, asking them to intercede for it. Also it believes, that they will receive their equal rights in heaven, according to the promise of the Lord Jesus. In this meaning the believer chants in the prayer of second service of Wednesday¹² early morning, saying:

אֲמֵנָה לֵךְ מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ. מִיָּד מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ.
וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ: וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ
וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ וְחַיָּה
וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה
וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה
וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ אֵלֶּיךָ. וְחַיָּה

Its translation is: "The apostles say to our Lord, what will you give to us who have loved you?" Our Saviour answered and said to them: "I will make you sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:28-29).

In addition, the following is mentioned in Friday's¹³ Morning Prayer:

¹² Sh'heemo P 101
¹³ Sh'heemo P 190

مَن يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا
 يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا
 يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا
 يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا يَلَا

Its translation is: Who will not wonder when he sees the apostles sitting on thrones, clothed in fire and wrapped in flames and judging the house of Israel? Hallelujah, blessed is he who entrusted to their hands the power over the heights and the depths ".

PETER'S RUSHNESS IN HIS SPEECH

Following the confession of Peter, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, he commanded his disciples that they shall not tell that to anyone, "Because his time hadn't come yet". The confession of his apostles, in His divinity, prepared the way before him, to announce the sacrament of redemption, and he told them for the first time about his death and resurrection. The preacher says: **From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (Matthew 16:21).**

The disciples were well surprised at these words of the Lord. And Peter rushed in his speech, disapproved of the sufferings and death of The Redeemer. The Evangelist says: **Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (Matthew 16:22).** The loving fervour, which Peter felt toward his Lord, in fact was Satan's deceit in order to make Peter fall. The reason for which Jesus

turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matthew 16:23). Peter deserved this rebuke for seeking worldly glory. Jesus called him Satan, because Satan tried to tempt the Lord Jesus in the wilderness and failed, and now was trying again through Peter. The Lord Jesus rebuked him as he rebuked Satan in the wilderness and drove him away.

Peter's fault was that he did not perceive the secret of the cross, which was to pay back what was due to the divine justice, with the death of Jesus Christ through whom the eternal life is acquired to all believers. For both mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption are bound to the doctrine of the Lord Christ's Divinity. Whosoever denies his divine redemption denies his Divinity. Whoever believes in him as a Saviour, believes also in the mystery of His Divine Incarnation and subsequently in his sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

After Peter was rebuked, the Lord Jesus explained to him the conditions of true discipleship, that is, self-denial, carrying the cross every day and following him, the glorious one, to walk in his path in the way of sufferings, without weariness nor exhaustion.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD JESUS ON THE MOUNTAIN

The Lord Jesus designated Peter, James, and John to witness great matters such as the transfiguration on the mount, the revival of the daughter of Jairus and the last prayer at the garden. Peter erred in his saying during the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus on mount Tabor or Harmon, where His appearance changed before his three disciples mentioned above. His face shone like the sun, and His



clothes became as white as snow. Moses and Elijah appeared talking with Him about His departure, which would be accomplished in the holy city. The word "departure" here means salvation and redemption and the work of atonement, which the Lord was going to complete by His death.

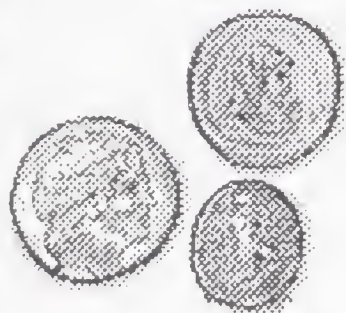
While wondering about the exciting spectacle, Peter said in haste: **"Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."** (Matthew 17:4).

In these words of his, Peter wished to honour the Lord and both prophets Moses and Elijah and to isolate the Lord from places of danger, and to stay on the mountain and not to descend to suffer and die by the hand of the Jews. But he was mistaken by equalising the Lord Jesus with the prophets Moses and Elijah, the matter which heaven refused to accept. In addition, he heard the heavenly Father from the cloud saying: **"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"** (Matthew 17:5). In this, heaven declared, that Jesus is the Son of God, although, He appeared before people as a man. While the three disciples were facing down to the ground and terrified, the cloud raised, lifting up both prophets returning them to where they were, because they had fulfilled their mission in testifying to The Lord Jesus. Jesus was found alone the only Son of God the heavenly Father, without an associate.

In the incident of the transfiguration, Peter stood between the cross and the glory, he heard about the cross and death, he saw the great glory and he learnt the perpetual lesson, that there is no glory

without the cross. Peter's life was greatly effected with the incident of the transfiguration and later wrote about it saying: **For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18).**

THE MIRACLE OF PAYING THE TAX



Once it happened in Capernaum that the tax collectors of the temple asked the Lord to pay the two-drachma tax, which every male Jew twenty years of age and over is required to pay, for the up keeping of the temple. The Lord was probably asked to pay this tax for the first time, by the stirrings of the high priest, scribes of the people and the Pharisees. They were trying to minimise the Lord's state by depriving him of the right of the exemption granted to the prophets, the teachers of the law, the priests, and the Levites. Or to find a reason to hurt him for not paying this tax. Likely, the Lord accustomed them to pay this tax yearly. The tax collectors met Peter outside and asked him, **"Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"** Without asking his teacher, Peter replied, **"Yes."** When he returned home, **"Jesus anticipated him, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From who do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?' Peter said to Him, 'From strangers.' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are free.'"** (Matthew 17:24-26). In this the Lord showed Peter the mistake of his rashness. Before Peter informed to the Lord about the subject of the tax, the Lord informed

him that He knows what is hidden. By the Lord's dialogue with Peter, he declared that no one had the right to ask Him to pay tax to the temple, which is the house of His heavenly Father. At the same time Jesus did not cling to his right, because by persisting not to pay the tax He may have made others stumble. Many of the chief-priests, the scribes, as well as some of the people were not confessing Him Christ. So His refusal to pay the tax would have been regarded to them as a revolt and abasement against the temple and religion, particularly that this tax was an original order and not from the elders teaching. The Lord Jesus willed to connect his submission to the order, to a miracle, which will strengthen Peter's faith, and declare that this obedience was not constrained. This is why he ordered Peter to bring what was required, by throwing the line, for a quick catch, and told him that upon opening the mouth of the first fish caught, he would find a coin of four-drachma, which was enough to pay what he and his Master owed. Jesus said: **“give it to them for Me and you.”** (Matthew 17:27) - and it was so. The intention of this miracle was not of personal benefit, but to preserve Peter's faithfulness and honour and to present an example of keeping the Mosaic laws accurately.

THE ADHERENCE OF PETER AND HIS FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS

Once it occurred that the Lord Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, in Capernaum, about the sacrament of His Holy Body and Blood, by saying to the crowd: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”** (John 6:53-54). Many of his disciples on hearing it said: **“This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”** ... From that time many of His

disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (John 6:60-69).

Peter said these words for himself and on behalf of all the apostles, those, who loved the Lord more than anything in the world, left every thing, and followed him. The Lord chose them and knows them because he is the examiner of the hearts and the innermost. St. John the Evangelist cites the incident saying: **“Jesus answered them, ‘did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.”** (John 6:70-71).

When the Lord Jesus said the parable of the servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, He wanted to make them understand that his second coming would be unexpected. That they should be ready to receive Him, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when they would not expect him - (Luke 12:35-40). **“Peter asked, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?’”** (Luke 12:41).

Immediately after the speech of the Lord Jesus about forgiveness of sins and giving the authority of binding and loosing to his apostles, Peter asked him about how many times he shall forgive whom sinned against him. **“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”** Jesus said to him, **‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’”** (Matthew 18:21-22).

When the Lord talked concerning the difficulty of entering the kingdom of heaven, Peter spoke for himself and on behalf of his friends, saying to the Lord Jesus: “**we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?**” So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’” (Matthew 19:27-30).

PETER'S OBJECTION TO THE LORD IN THE WASHING OF THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES



That was at the night of the Lord Jesus' passions, when he sat at the table on the Passover, like the head of the family and his disciples around him, eating with him the lamb. Before presenting them the sacrament of His Body and Blood, in the form of bread and wine, Jesus stood up from His place, took off His robe, designated to a teacher. He wrapped himself with a towel like a servant, took a water jug and a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, starting with the youngest one. When the turn came to Simon Peter he objected to the Lord and asked with astonishment, “**Lord, are You washing my feet?**” He was not content with the words of the Lord that he will later

understand the secret of what he is doing, but renewed his objection, saying, **“You shall never wash my feet!”** With these words, Peter, - whether he was aware of it or not - finds the Lord in fault and condemns the deed of his friends who yielded to the will of the Lord and had their feet washed by Him. Peter showed them as to be less understanding than he is. The Lord rebuked him and said: **“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”** Peter then understood and asked more than what the Lord intended to do, for he replied, **“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”** This is what we call the pride in the scope of humility. Although his deeds proceeded from good intentions, still they were wrong. This is why the Lord erred him, showing to him that there is no need to wash his hands and his head, saying: **“He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”** (John 13:5-10). That is because a well educated person washes before going to visit or to respond to any invitation to a banquet. After the short trip, nothing needs to be washed except the feet.

THE PRIDE BEFORE THE FALL



At the table of the Last Supper, the Lord talks in detail about his passions and declares to his disciples that they will forsake him and flee as soon as he will be arrested. **“All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”** (Matthew 26:31-32). Peter could not believe that he would perform such a disgraceful act,

therefore saying: “‘Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ And so said all the disciples. (Matthew 26:33-35).

Peter's answer to the Lord indicates simplicity and love at the same time. He as usual rushes in speaking, but he is pure-hearted, affectionate and sincere. He is blameable for his words, because he did not understand that the saying of the Lord to his disciples about their doubt and desertion, is a prophecy that would be fulfilled. Peter doubted the truth of this prophecy and falsified it, whether aware of it or not. He showed conceit and pride, as to be better than his friends who could forsake their master and run away, and he esteems himself the loving - clinging to the Lord more than all of them.

Then the Lord went out with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it (John 18:1). **“When He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’” (Luke 22:40).** He designated Peter, James and John to see Him suffer, hear Him talking, to testify when He commits His will into



the hands of His Father and His willful acceptance to drink the cup of death in the place of humanity. It is notable that Jesus left those three disciples and went to pray to His heavenly Father. When He went back to them, He found Peter and those who were with him asleep. He said to Peter **“Could you not watch with Me one**

hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:40-41).

Then Judas came, leading the soldiers those who were put under the command of the chief of the Jews and with them servants sent from the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and the elders of the people who were great in number, carrying torches lamps and arms to arrest Jesus. Peter thought that he should defend his Master, so he drew out his sword and struck the servant of the high priest named Milks on his head trying to kill him, but he hit his right ear and cut it off. Jesus showed His discontent with the act of His zealous disciple, and ordered him to put his sword back into its sheath - reminding him of the old wisdom that says, **“for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”** (Luke 26:52). That is to say, that revenge brings forth revenge. Then He made it quite clear that He didn’t need the help of Peter, His disciples or any human being. If He willed to get rid of His enemies, He wouldn't have to do anything but to ask His Father to send to Him more than twelve legions of angels. His disciples till now didn't realise that the arresting of their Master must take place that the scriptures would be fulfilled. This is what Jesus came to this world to do – to redeem the world by His death and resurrection.

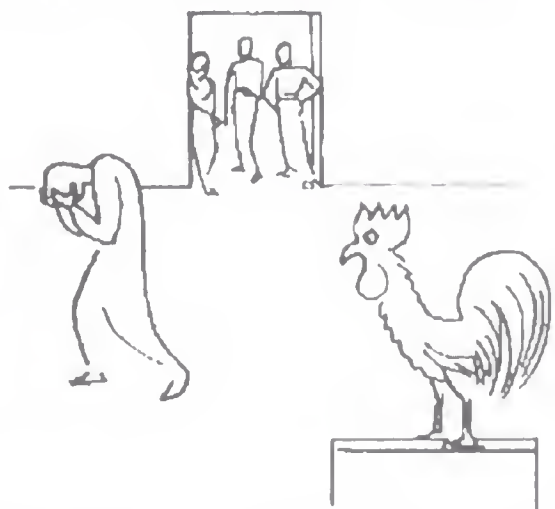
Jesus stretched His hand, healed Milks, and returned his ear to its place, to teach us to love our enemies and to do well to those who hate us. That miracle was the end of His miracles before His crucifixion.

PETER DISOWNS HIS MASTER



The soldiers arrested the Lord Jesus at night, and His disciples deserted Him and fled, but Peter followed Him at a distance.

Jesus was brought to the courtyard of the high priest. He was condemned to death, affronted by the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, mocked and struck painfully. **“Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee.’ But he denied it before them all, saying; ‘I do not know what you are saying.’ And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, ‘This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ But again he denied with an oath, ‘I do not know the Man!’ And a little later, those who stood by came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.’ Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the**



Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.” (Matthew 26:69-75). Peter became the first repentant among the followers of the Lord Jesus and an

example to the sinners who regret their sins and return to God, and whose sins are forgiven no matter how great they are, because God's mercy is greater. Thus the Lord Jesus went alone to the cross and died for the sin of the world and redeemed the world with His death.

PETER BELIEVES IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD



The Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and the women informed Peter, who together with John went to the tomb to ascertain the authenticity of the resurrection. John outran Peter and reached the tomb first, but he did not go in, because of the dreadfulness of the situation and his respect to Peter's age. Peter came and went into the tomb first, followed by John. They found the tomb empty of the Lord's Body, and saw strips of linen as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head just lying there. The cloth was folded up by itself, separated from the linen. This indicated that what had happened in the tomb was in order and that the Lord truly rose and His body was not taken away by friends, nor by the enemies. If He were stolen, He would have been stolen together with the grave clothes, even if the grave clothes were left; they would not have been easily removed. They were left in order as if Jesus had still been in them. When the Lord arose, He came out of his grave clothes while they remained in order. Upon seeing these things, Simon Peter believed that Jesus had risen from the dead and was alive. Peter had no doubt that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The doubts, which engulfed Peter when he saw the Lord being arrested, suffering and dying, had vanished. Peter was the first person who believed in the resurrection of the Lord from the dead.

THE LORD OPENLY ACCEPTS PETER, THE REPENTANT



On the night of his passions Jesus sat at the table of the Last Supper, together with His twelve apostles. He ate with them the Passover, according to the Old Testament, handed them the Holy Eucharist, and prophesied that Judas would deliver Him to His enemies. Luke the preacher mentioned the dispute, which happened among the apostles as to which of them, was considered to be greatest. **“The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.” (Luke 22:25-27).** In this the Lord Jesus Christ uses Himself as an example to His apostles as to how to administrate the Church, and said: **“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28).** The time drew near for that sacrifice, but before He completed it practically, He proved to them the truth of His words, that he came to serve not to be served and washed their feet and charged them to be humble. He then saw and heard them quarrel as to which of them is to be greatest. He set for them a golden principle for the administration of the Church. That leadership in the Church is the service, not the authority and to realise the loftiness of the gift which man receives from heaven by receiving an apostolic order, this is why he said to them: **“But you are those who have continued with Me in My**

trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:28-30).

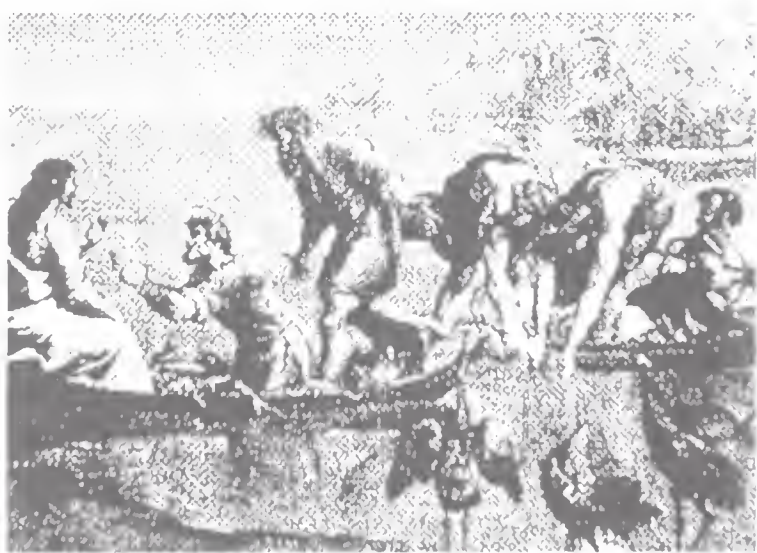
In this holy and historic connection, the Lord Jesus prophesied about the fall of His disciple into the great temptation of forsaking Him and running away during his passions, crucifixion, and death. He reminds Simon Peter particularly for disgracefully disowning His Master, while foretelling his repentance and return to Him. **“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”** (Luke 22:31-32).

How great is the grace, which Simon Peter had received! The Lord prayed for him to traverse the hard temptation and difficult tribulation, which he confronted in his life. And to be saved from Satan the wicked who asked to sift him and his friends, as he did in the past with Job, the just, and when God gave him permission to tempt him, he treated him severely and tortured him with various temptations, which Job endured patiently. Job became the example of the good endurers - those who overcome Satan by holding fast to God and relying on him. Thus Simon gained victory over Satan, by the power of the Lord's prayer for him. We notice here, the difference between Judas Iscariot, the traitor, about whom the Lord



prophesied that He will deliver him to his enemies, and gave him woe saying: **“The Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!”** (Luke 22:22). Judas, after his tremendous fall, did not

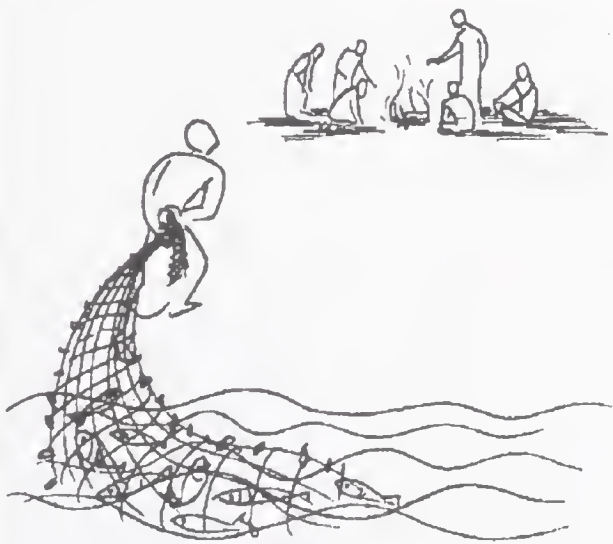
return back to his comrades the apostles. Although he totally regretted what he did, he remained obedient to the Devil. Despondency dominated his heart and he forgot God's mercy upon the sinners, and Christ's call to them to come to him. He hung himself. Simon was surrounded by the Lord's providence that protected him. His heart was full of penitence for disowning his master. He cried bitterly, but he did not allow desperation to govern him and he did not leave his friends, those who loved the Lord. We find him clinging to them, particularly to John, the closest to him, and his faith was not annihilated, because the Lord's prayer for him was granted, which was the result of the Lord's knowledge of his innocent and pure heart. What arose from him was of human weakness. By returning to the Lord with regret, his sin was forgiven. Not only so, but his acceptance was declared before his friends, as a shepherd to them as well as to the lambs of the Church and its sheep, as we will find in the following.



The Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to Peter and to the other disciples many times in different places and times and in various forms. After His resurrection He was not showing Himself to just anybody whom wanted to see Him - this is why the holy Gospel describes

His appearance, saying: **“Jesus showed Himself”. (John 21:1).** At one of the times he appeared as follows: Peter lead his friends to the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee and said to them: **“I am going fishing.”** They said to him, **“We are going with you also.”** They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning they pulled the nets into the boat and

faced the shore. While they were about two hundred cubits from shore, they heard a voice of a stranger standing on the shore calling them: **“Children, have you any food?”** When they answered, **“No”**, He said to them, **“Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”** So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.” Then John said to Peter: **“It is the Lord!”** Before they used to call the Lord Jesus **“Teacher”**, but after His resurrection from the dead and by the effect of this resurrection on them, His name became to them **“Lord”**. As a result of this miracle we see that John recognises that the Person who was standing on the shore was the Lord. That was because Jesus had three years earlier, on the same sea, performed a similar miracle after He had called Peter, and his brother Andrew and John and James, the sons of Zebedee to be His disciples and to make them fishers of men. In this miracle He declared that He will be with them, and He will guide them to catch many. And by obeying Him and their co-operation with each other they will gain many souls.



Peter immediately believed the words of his friend John and he wrapped his outer garment around him and jumped into the sea to come to Jesus. As usual by rushing and abandoning the boat, he erred to show that he loves his Master more than his friends. He also did not turn to help them haul in

the net, which was full of fish. Jesus guided them to the fish to gather it not to leave it. After his friends hauled in the net for two hundred cubits, and their feet touched the shore, they left the net full of fish in the sea to do their duty toward their Master. And **“they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.”** (John

21:9). The Lord asked them to bring some of the fish, which was in the net. Peter noticed his own mistake and rushed to work and dragged the net to the land. When the fish were counted, there were 153 large fish. They were astonished, and they knew that when the Lord asked them for some fish, He did not need it. He wanted to make himself known to them and to show them that He cares about their temporal interests, particularly as they found coals with fish and bread on them. The fact that the net did not tare, was another miracle.

Jesus knew that they toiled all the night. By His wisdom and love, He minded their need and said to them: **“Come and eat breakfast.”** Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. (John 21:12-13).

PETER THE SHEPHERD



After having breakfast, Jesus showed special attention to Peter, by declaring his repentance accepted. Because of his penitence and sincere regret for his great sin

in denying his Master. He not only forgave him, but also accepted him back in His apostolic position, raising his rank from fishing souls to tending them, and appointed him a representative of his brothers. **“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah,**

do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time; ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’ ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.’ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’” (John 21:15-19). Then Peter followed the Lord Jesus as a disciple imitating his teacher in sacrifice and self-denial for the salvation of souls. “Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, ‘Lord, who is the one who betrays You?’ Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, ‘But Lord, what about this man?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.’” (John 21:20-22).

On the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, Peter took over the mission of his post for the first time when he was fishing (Luke 5:10) And on the shore of the same sea, Simon Peter regained the management of his office, also while he was fishing (John 21:15-19). Not only to be fisher of men, but shepherd of souls as well.



Shepherdship is considered one of the sublime attributes and splendid names attributed in the Holy Bible to the divine identity. The Shepherd prophet David called God, Shepherd, to express with it, his feeling about God's care for him. “**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**” (Psalm 23:1). And the Lord said, in the mouth of

the prophet Ezekiel: **“I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”** (Ezekiel 34:15-16). The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the Lord Jesus and said: **“Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; ... He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”** (Isaiah 40:10-11).

The Lord Jesus declared himself as the good shepherd, and said: **“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”** (John 10:14-15). And said to those who believe in him: **“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”** (Luke 12:32). Therefore, Jesus is the shepherd of the lambs and those who believe in Him are His flock, this is why the apostle Peter says to the believers: **“For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”** (1 Peter 2:25). Jesus is the Lord of the lambs and their shepherd and He is the only One who has got the right to appoint shepherds to tender his blessed flock redeemed with his holy blood. And appointed Peter a shepherd to the lambs, rams and sheep.

The scholar Saint Gregorius John Ba-Hebraeus +1286 AD said in his book, The Treasure of Secrets: "The Lord indicates by lambs, boys and by rams and sheep, men and women. And by this triple question and confession healed Peter's triple denial".

The scholar Mor Moses Bar-Kipho +903 AD, by commenting the Lord's saying to Simon Peter - "FEED MY LAMBS" (John. 21:15-19) - Says¹⁴: "The lambs are the shepherds of the Church and its prelates. The Lord appointed Simon as their chief and prelate. The rams are male believers and the sheep are the women the weak daughters of Eve. By the lambs he meant the twelve holy apostles, and by the rams the seventy-two disciples, priests, teachers of the Church and its chiefs, those who guide the lambs of Christ. Also He meant by the sheep the flock composed of all the holy faithful". And Bar-Kipho continues his speech saying: "If the ordained is Patriarch... holds the crosier, and is said to him what the Lord said only to Peter, **"strengthen your brethren."** (Luke 22:32).

The patriarch takes this privilege in chiefdom, ordination, or enthronement ceremony as an ordained bishop for being the successor of the apostle Peter the chief and the head of the apostles. The opinion of the Syrian Church is the reality, that of the apostle St. Peter being the chief of his comrade apostles, is elucidated in ecclesiastical rite, the following is written in the prayer of Monday night¹⁵:

[illegible]

¹⁴ Moses Bar-Kipho, *The Commentary of the Holy Orders*, Ch.3.

¹⁵ Sh'heemo P.22.

Its translation is: (And we remember) the exalted chiefs of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul.

The implicitness of the chiefdom in the Church is serving the believers, as it is clear in the command of the Lord Jesus who says: **“whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.”** (Matthew 20:26, 23:11 & Mark 9:35). In the Book of The Acts of the Apostles we feel the co-operation of all the apostles in the management of the Church, as it is clear in the election of Matthias (Acts 1) to replace the traitor Judas who hung himself. In choosing the seven deacons, (Acts 6), and in the Synod of Jerusalem, in the year 51, (Acts 15), and in sending one another to serve in various places, as Peter and John were sent to Samaria to give the Holy Spirit to those who were converted into Christianity and baptised by Phillip the deacon.

St. Paul the apostle makes both apostles James and John participants in the chiefdom of the apostles. He says: **“James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”** (Galatians 2:9). Again, St Paul says: **“for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostle-ship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles.”** (Galatians 2:8). That happened, to put in order the evangelical work. In addition, Paul speaks of the partiality of some to him or to Apollos or to Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12), and how he opposed Peter for being in the wrong (Galatians 2:11).

These matters do not minimise the dignity of Peter within the Church. He did not claim that he owns the Church, it is the Church of Christ, he did not try to manage it by himself only, but he was

It is written in the book of the ordinations of the Holy Orders and the service of the Sacraments designated for Pontiffs, within the prayers recited during the ordination of bishops, the following:

اَمِنْ لَكَ وَتَحْمِلُ لَكَ مَعْدَمَ زَعْمًا وَمَكْتَبًا سَأَلْ
 مَعْدَمَ مَعْلَمًا حَبِيبًا لَكَ فِي مَكْتَبِكَ وَمَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا
 حَتَمًا لَكَ مَنَحًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا وَمَعْمُورًا
 لَكَ حَبِيبًا وَمَعْلَمًا مَعْمُورًا وَمَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا حَتَمًا
 حَاتِبًا

حَبِيبًا مَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا
 حَتَمًا مَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا
 حَاتِبًا مَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا
 حَاتِبًا مَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا

حَبِيبًا مَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا
 اَمِنْ لَكَ وَتَحْمِلُ لَكَ مَعْدَمَ زَعْمًا وَمَكْتَبًا سَأَلْ
 حَبِيبًا مَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا
 وَمَعْلَمًا حَاتِبًا مَعْمُورًا مَعْمُورًا مَسْتَبًا

Judas the traitor, believing that they should complete the number of the twelve apostles, to those whom the Lord Jesus promised to seat on twelve seats to judge the twelve tribes. In regard to this, St. Luke writes in the Book of Acts the following: **“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, ‘Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry. (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) For it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’ Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.’ And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”** (Acts 1:15-26).

PETER THE SUCCESSFUL PREACHER



Before his ascension, the Lord Jesus had ordered his disciples not to leave the holy city until they receive the power from above. They were gathered in the upper-room. Around one hundred and twenty souls, had joined together constantly in prayer. The Holy Spirit

descended on them on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension of the Lord into heaven.

The Lord before his ascension into heaven said to his disciples: **“for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit ... But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** (Acts 1:5-8).



Immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, there were gathered a multitude of God-fearing Jewish inhabitants in the holy city. Those who arrived there were from all nations under heaven, and each one of them heard the disciples speak his own language. Utterly amazed they asked one another, **“Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?”** ... they

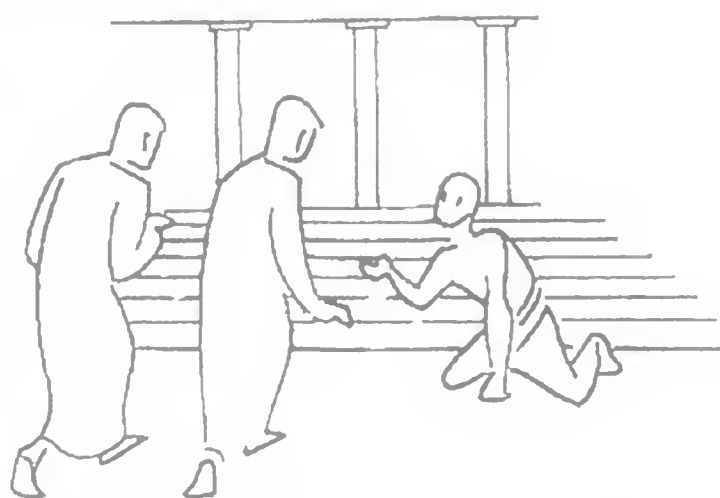
were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'Whatever could this mean?' ... Others mocking said, 'they are full of new wine.'" (Acts 2:1-13).

Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, stood up and addressed the crowd with his famous sermon by which he proved that the disciples were not drunk. He quoted from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as he did afterwards in all his sermons (Acts 1-4, 10, 11, 15). At this point he reminded the crowd with the fulfilment of the prophecy of the prophet Joel, saying: "'in the last days', says God, 'That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'" (Acts 2:17-21). Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter says to the Jews: "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." (Acts 2:22-24). In addition, Peter quotes from the saying of the prophet David who said on the mouth of the Lord, For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. (Psalms 16:10 & Acts 2:27).

Peter's sermon has a deep effect on the hearers who were cut to their hearts and they said to Peter and the other apostles, "brothers what shall we do?" Peter Said: "Repent, and let every one of you be

baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children” ... those who gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (Acts 2:37-41). Thus, Peter opened the door of faith to the Jews.

THE MIRACLE OF HEALING THE CRIPPLED



Five days after the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter, and John went up to the temple at the time of the ninth hour prayer, that is 3pm. At the temple gate called Beautiful, they met a man who was crippled since birth. He looked and asked

them for alms. Looking straight at him they said, **“Look at us”**. The man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Peter then said: **“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”** And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them; walking, leaping, and praising God. (Acts 3:1-10). The people praised God for this miracle, and astonished they came running to them and looked to Peter and John in reverence for possessing such a miraculous power. Peter said to them: **“Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? (Acts 3:12).**

Then he preached to them in the name of Jesus Christ and said: **“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”** (Acts 3:13-16). He called them to repent and believe in Christ. About three thousand men believed, and the number of men who heard the word and believed grew to about five thousand. (Acts 4:4).

For the effacement of the news of the miracle, Peter and John were arrested by the chief priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees. The following day the Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem for their trial and the following question was put to them: **“By what power or by what name have you done this?”** (Acts 4:7).

The name of God is the secret of his power, so the question means, “what is the source of this supernatural power?” Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, delivered a speech by which he defended their case. Calling them to faith in Jesus Christ, he said: **“let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** (Acts 4:10-12). The members of the Sanhedrin

were confused and from among them there was one who was found favorably inclined to the disciples of the Lord. So they ordered Peter and John to go out. “they conferred among themselves, saying, ‘What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.’ And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’ So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.” (Acts 4:15-21).

PETER FIGHTS AGAINST HYPOCRISY IN THE CHURCH



The believers in Christ lived in full fellowship, there were no a needy or poor among them, they were all brethren. The rich people were bringing their properties, putting them at the feet of the apostles to be spent on the other believers.

The apostles were guardians of the faith and good behaviour. As Peter felt the lying spirit is incarnated in Ananias and his wife Saphira, who sold their property and did not bring the full value to the apostles, Peter was assured that this is the spirit of Satan. He

asked them, in front of the disciples, and their lie became clear. He rebuked them and cursed them for colluding together to lie to the Holy Spirit and they both perished at once. **“So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”** (Acts 5:1-11). The believers did learn a perpetual lesson that God hates hypocrisy and rejects hypocrites.

PETER PERFORMS MIRACLES



Peter was the first among the apostles of the Lord Jesus to confirm the Gospel by performing miracles. God greatened to him this gift. **“So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.”** (Acts 5:15-16).

In the city of Lydda, Peter healed Aeneas the paralytic by saying to him: **“Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.”** Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. (Acts 9:32-35).

While Peter was in Lydda two men came from Joppa and told him about the death of a virtuous woman named Tabitha, which means (Dorcas), who **“was full of good works and charitable deeds.”** (Acts 9:36). The Church willed to honour her after her death and sent for Peter. Peter went with the two men, when they arrived to Joppa. They took him upstairs to the room where Tabitha's body was. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the

robes and other clothing that Tabitha had made while she was still with them. He felt pain and asked them all to leave him alone. He got down on his knees and prayed with tears. Turning toward the body of Tabitha he said in Syriac Aramaic **“Tabitha, arise.”** She opened her eyes; he took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. The believers rejoiced to great extent, and many heard about this miracle and believed in the Lord Jesus.

Luke the preacher, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, describes the effect of the signs done by the apostles on the people, their faith, repentance, and entrance into Christ's fold. He also describes the effect of these things on the Scribes, Pharisees, and the chief priests. He discusses how they persecuted and imprisoned the apostles and how the angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out, saying: **“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught.”** (Acts 5:17-23). And how the disciples were brought violently before the assembly of the Jews - the high priest asking: **“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name (the name of the Lord Jesus)? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!”** But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: **“We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”** (Acts 5:28-32).

The high priest and the members of the Jewish assembly became furious and wanted to kill the apostles. However a Pharisee named

Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honoured by all the people, stood up in the midst of the Sanhedrin and asked that the apostles be put outside for a while. He spoke wisely and justly. "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest you even be found to fight against God." And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (Acts 5:33-42).

THE CHOOSING OF THE SEVEN DEACONS



Peter participated with his friends the apostles in organising the Church and improving its state. When the Grecian Jews who were converted into Christianity murmured against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being neglected in the service, the apostles ordered the believers to choose seven men who were known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. They did so. The apostles prayed and laid their hands on them and appointed them deacons to assist them in the ministry of Baptism, preach and wait on tables - which is to distribute the daily bread to the poor and the needy. (Acts 6)

THE SENDING OF PETER AND JOHN TO SAMARIA

A drastic persecution broke out by the Jews against the followers of the Lord Jesus in the holy city. Because of it the believers scattered, (except for the apostles), through Judea and Samaria. Phillip, one of the seven deacons went down to Samaria and preached in Jesus Christ and many men and women were baptised. **“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”** (Acts 8:14-17)

PETER OPENS THE DOOR OF THE FAITH TO THE GENTILES

Peter in Joppa was staying at the house of a tanner man named Simon, whose house was close to the sea. Peter was praying on the roof at around six o'clock. He became hungry, and as they were preparing food for him, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him **“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”** Peter was alarmed, and said: **“Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”** The voice spoke to him **“What God has cleansed you must not call common.”** (Acts 10:10-16). This happened three times after which the sheet was taken back to heaven. Peter awoke and

wondered about the meaning of the vision. Three men then knocked on the door looking for Peter. They were sent by Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian division, which was settled in Caesarea. He was a heathen man, but he was praying, fasting and distributing alms to the poor. While fasting to the ninth hour of the day, (close to sunset), he saw in a vision an angel of God who came in to him and said: **“Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.”** (Acts 10:31-32).

The three men told Peter about all this, and Peter together with those who were with him came to Caesarea and entered the house of Cornelius, **“As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I myself am also a man.’”** (Acts 10:25-26). Peter said to the gathering: **“You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore, I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?** Therefore, Cornelius told him about the vision, which he had seen four days earlier. Peter was amazed at Cornelius words and said: **“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.”** (Acts 10). Peter derived his evangelical sermon and declared his testimony about the Lord Jesus who died for the salvation of humanity and rose from the dead on the third day. He is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10:34-43)

While Peter was talking about these things, the Holy Spirit descended upon all those who heard the word, and Peter said to his comrades: **“Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptised who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”** And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days. (Acts 10:47-48).

This is how St. Peter, the apostle of circumcision, opened the door of the faith to the gentiles. The Church was first displeased with him and objected his action; **“You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”** (Acts 11:3). Then Peter explained to them everything precisely as it had happened - about the vision that he saw and how the Holy Spirit came on the gentiles. When they heard this, they praised God.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD TAKES PETER OUT OF THE JAIL

The year 43 AD was the first year of the reign of Herod Agrephas, the first the grandson of Herod the Great who killed the apostle James son of Zededee with the sword to please the Jews. St. James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1), was one of the magnates of Christianity there. When Herod saw that this pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter also and put him in jail, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Peter was bound with two chains between two guards, between him and the gate of the jail were four levels of guards, and at each level four guards. Peter was put in jail in the first days of the feast and the king was planning to hand him over to the people after the Passover.

However, the Church was earnestly praying for Peter. Its prayer ascended into heaven, it was heard and responded to. At mid night,

God sent His angel into the dark cell and filled it with light. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. **“Quick, get up!”** The chains left Peter's wrists. The guards fell into a deep sleep, and the angel said to Peter, **“put on your clothes and sandals”**, and Peter did so. **“Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.”** Peter followed him out, between wakefulness and sleep. He had no idea if he was seeing a vision or what was happening was true. They passed the first and second group of guards and then the third and the fourth. The iron gate was opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, the Angel left him. Peter realised that what had happened was true. He came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognised Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, **“Peter is at the door!”** They did not believe her. **“You are out of your mind”**, they told her and some of them said: **“It must be his angel.”** Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter gesticulated with his hand be quiet and described how the Lord brought him out of prison. He asked them to tell James, the Lord's brother and the brothers about this. Then he left for another place. (Acts 12:1-17).

SAINT PETER IN ANTIOCH

The great historian Patriarch Afrem I Barsom +1957 AD said: "But the Church of Antioch is confirmed by the permanent old ecclesiastical tradition which was unanimously agreed on by a privileged number of the early chieftains of Christianity. To its early scholars and historians, St Peter the apostle preached the Christian religion, and guided and baptised a great number of

people. He built the first church, enacted to the believers to face the East for prayer and established in it his apostolic see and he became its first bishop, that is its Patriarch to which all its patriarchs are sequenced. From among those who declared this, the scholar Oreganos +256 AD, Eusabius of Caesaria +340 AD, St. Ephraim the Syrian +373 AD, St. John Chrysostom +407 AD and the teacher Heronimus +420 AD. Particularly St. Severius of Antioch +538 AD who confirmed this reality in his sermons seven times and mentioned Peter's chiefdom on the apostles and his precedence eight times.¹⁹

Christianity entered Antioch by some of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who had been scattered fleeing from Jerusalem²⁰ because of the persecution agitated against them by the Jews following the martyrdom of Stephen the head of the deacons (Acts 11:19). The apostles then sent to Antioch Barnabas, one of the seventy disciples, as he saw that the service of the Word had flourished in it, he went and brought Paul with him from Tarsus and stayed in Antioch for a full year preaching (Acts 11:22&26).

Some historians proposed the following: that Peter came to Antioch in the year 34 AD; the ascension of the Lord Jesus into heaven was in the year 30 AD²¹; Paul believed in the Lord Jesus one year after that and came to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, that is, the year 34. He met Peter there and stayed with him fifteen days, and he saw none of the other apostles-only James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:18-19). In the same year Peter came to Antioch and stayed there seven years, till the year 41 AD then returned to Jerusalem²².

¹⁹ Patriarch Afrem I Barsom, *Al-Durar Al-Mafeesa*, in the shortened Church's History-Boms 1940, vol. 1, PP44&45.

²⁰ Eusabius of Caesaria's History (+340) Vol.2, ch.3, prg.3.

²¹ The birth of the Lord Christ in flesh occurred four years before the current Christian date, these years were added to, world's account BC

²² Asad Rostom, *The Church of God's City-Antioch*, Beirut vol. 1, pp 19& 20, and Patriarch Jacob III (while Bishop), *the History of the Syrian Church*, Beirut 1953, vol.I, p. 55.

After his preaching in different places in Palestine, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa and Caesaria, Herod Agrippa king of Judea tried to kill him. He jailed him in Jerusalem at the end of the year 43 or the beginning of the year 44 AD. The angel of the Lord saved him and took him out of prison. In the year 44 AD Herod Agrippa perished in Caesarea (Acts 12:23).

The famous historian Bar-Hebraeus +1286 AD, in his ecclesiastical history, said: "In the first year of the reign of Aquippa in Judea, James, the son of Zebedee was killed and Peter imprisoned and as the angel saved him and brought him out of prison, left Jerusalem preaching in the way for a period of two years then reached Antioch."

Being busy in preaching, Peter was obliged sometimes to be absent from Antioch, therefore he ordained Eudios bishop as his vicar and successor²³. Peter went roaming in the countries of Damascus, Tripoli and the Island of Arwad and others. Then he left to the countries of Pontus on the shore of the Black Sea, Galatia, Capadocia, the region of Asia Minor and Bithynia.

In the year 51 AD he returned to Jerusalem, where he attended the apostolic council which was held after the attempt of some converted Jews to force the converted gentiles to be circumcised. The aim of this was to make them Jews before becoming Christians. The council determined that, **"it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."** (Acts 15:28-29). This decision was sent to Antioch

²³ Asad Rostom, The Church of God's City-Antioch, vol.I, p.20.

with Paul and Barnabas, together with Judas (called Barsabas) and Silas. Peter together with James and John were entrusted with preaching this Gospel to the Jews, as Paul and Barnabas were entrusted to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. (Galatians 2: 7-9).

In the year 52, Peter was found in Antioch and Paul was there as well. Apparently, while there, they performed the miracle of bringing to life a young man called Kasian, the only son of his parents. Peter established a church in his house, which was known by the church of Kasian. It was related by the scholar St. Jacob of Seruge²⁴, +521 AD and it remained built until the second half of the thirteenth century.

St. Paul the apostle wrote to the Galatians concerning what happened in Antioch between him and Peter the apostle. **Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"** (Galatians 2:11-14). The inspiration of the apostles is bound to their infallibility in the religious teaching, not in their ethical personal acts. Inspiration is not bound to the infallibility from err in every thing. We feel in the incident of Cornelius' conversion into Christianity, that Peter believed that salvation in Christ is to all the world, the reason for which he delightedly accepted Paul's blame,

²⁴ Al-Durar Al-Nafeesa PP 46&47.

with this, he confessed his guilt. If the ascription of the epistle which is called the second Epistle of Peter, to Peter, is genuine, we read his laudation to Paul, saying: “consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Peter was alone in Antioch from the year 53 to 60 as the majority of the trustworthy historians confirm it. Paul came to Jerusalem in the year 58 and he met there James the Lord's brother (Acts 21:18) but does not mention that he met Peter, because Peter was in Antioch.

SAINT PETER IN ROME

Although the majority of historians consider that the apostle Peter visited Rome where he was martyred, they all agree that he did not reach there before the reign of the tyrant Neron who ruled from the year 54 to 68 AD. The assumption of some of them is that St. Peter was in Rome during the time of Caesar Claudius whose reign started in the year 41 AD and lasted to the year 54 AD. That he remained as a bishop in Rome for 25 years does not conform to what was recorded by the writers of the New Testament about St. Peter. For it is clear in the New Testament that, in the year 43-44, he was in Jerusalem according to what is quoted in Acts 12:3. He was also there in the year 51 according to what is quoted in Acts 15, and after that he was in Antioch according to what is cited in Galatians 1:11.

In addition, he preached to the believers in many provinces of Asia Minor and visited them as it is shown in the First Epistle which he

wrote between the year 63 & 67 AD. He sent it to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia Minor and Bithynia (1Pet. 1:1). This epistle was written in Babylon as is clear in the verse 13 of the 5th chapter, where he says: **“She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.” (1 Pet 5:13).** This “Babylon” is either the original Babylon which is situated on the river Euphrates to where the Jews were taken into captivity and many of them stayed in it and became a centre for the Judaic studies. Peter's visit to it is not improbable. It could be Babylon in Egypt, which is close to Cairo and the one, which was established by the Babylonian refugees. They called it after the name of their ancestors' city.

Jews and Christians also call Rome Babylon. We find a reference to it in the Book of Revelation, chapters 17 & 18. The probability of this epistle being written from there is too weak²⁵. It is impossible to say that Peter was in Rome when Paul the apostle wrote his epistle to the Romans around the year 57 or 58. Mainly because his name is not mentioned among the brethren to whom he sent his greetings, And he was not in Rome when Paul wrote his epistles from there while in prison (from the year 61 or 62 to the year 63 or 64).

It is reasonable that both apostles met in Rome though for a short time with out referring to each other in their letters to the churches. Principally Paul confirmed in his epistles even the simple and particular matters and how can he disregard mentioning his friend Peter if he was with him in Rome!

For this reason, most of the precision researches concluded that Peter the apostle did not go to Rome until just before his martyrdom.

²⁵ William Parkly, Commentary of the First Epistle of Peter, Beirut 1960.

As the majority of the historians confirm that Simon the magician did not go to Rome before the reign of Nero, and Peter had an influential round with Simon the magician.

SIMON THE SORCERER

The following is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles about Simon the magician: Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ... But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs, which were done. Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart

is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." (Acts 8:5-24).

It is written in the Chronicles of Eusebius of Caesarea +340, quoting from the Protestations of Justinus²⁶ as the follows: “After the Lord's ascension into heaven, some appointed men were pushed forward by demons and declared them as gods. They not only remained unpersecuted, but also they were considered worthy to be honoured. One of them was Simon the Samaritan from the village Geto. During the time of Claudius Caesar, he performed in your imperial city²⁷ some wondrous magic works with the care of demons, which were acting in him, and was considered as god. As god you honoured him erecting a statue of him in the River Tiber between two arches and engraved on it in Latin writing (To Simon the holy god). Almost all the Samaritans and some of other nations confessed and worshiped him as the first god. At that time, a lady called Helen, a former prostitute in Tyre of Phonicia was roving with him and she was called his first thought.” These were told by Justinus and Irene agreed with him in the first volume of his work "Against Heresies" where he talked about this man and his corrupted teachings"²⁸.

Some historians testify that Peter the apostle came to Rome to pursuit Simon the sorcerer. And in some of the uncanonical books as the Book of the Acts of Peter, and the Epistle of the Apostles, that this Simon went to Rome and deceived its people with his magic and

²⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea-Chronicles Vol 2 Ch.13, Quote from (The Protestations of Justinus 1:26).

²⁷ The speech was addressed to the Emperor.

²⁸ Bishop Isidors, Al-Khareeda Al-Mafeesa, Church History, Egypt 1923, Vol.I, PP37&38, also the Biography of martyrs and saints-in Syriac, Bejan 1890, Vol.1

deluded them considering him a god. And, that Peter the Apostle followed him to Rome performing miraculous signs and Simon fell into the shade and the people followed Peter. Simon tried to draw attention to himself, so he appointed a time in which he will ascend into heaven before the eyes of the Romans, their king and chiefs. He called the demons of his magic to raise him above the ground, so they carried him on their shoulders and rose into space. The Romans admiration increased and they all shouted in one voice saying: "Great is the power of Simon". The apostle Peter was among the multitude, he knelt to the ground and prayed earnestly that the name of the Lord God might be glorified. The Lord answered his prayer. It is said, that also by the prayer of the apostle St. Paul that the demons were abashed and abandoned Simon who fell, breaking his legs. The sorcerer became scorned and a laughing-stock to all. His disciples carried him to a house near by, and then he committed suicide by throwing himself from the roof to the ground.

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT PETER

Saint Peter ordained Linos bishop to Rome, it is said, that St. Paul participated in this ordination. St. Peter was a hermit eating only lupine. When St. Peter was calumniated before Neron he imprisoned him in Rome and nine months later sentenced him to death crucified. So he crucified him, reversing him according to his will, on a high place called Watiqan on the 29th June, 67 AD²⁹.

It has been said that, when Neron's persecution became more intense against Christians, the believers were anxious about the life of St. Peter. They insisted that he should flee from Rome. While running away, outside the city, he saw the Lord Christ carrying his cross

²⁹ Al-Durar Al-Nafeesa PP48&49.

facing the city. "Where are you going Lord?" Peter asked. "To Rome to be crucified again" Jesus answered him. Peter understood the Lord's words and returned back to Rome and was arrested and imprisoned then he was martyred. It has been said, that he brought to the faith the guards and soldiers during the imprisonment period.³⁰

Peter wrote an Epistle to the Church, which was previously mentioned. It is esteemed among the epistles, which are known by "General or Catholic". It is full of the pastoral life and it is good encourages one to endure afflictions. It also highlights the good behaviour. Eusebius of Caesarea +340 AD said: "That the verity of the First Epistle of Peter is acknowledged. The ancient elders in their writings, as an indisputable Scripture have used it. And we are acquainted with, that his second Epistle which is found with us now, is not among the canonical Scriptures"³¹.

This second Epistle, since the early days of Christianity was under dispute among some fathers of the Church. Some of them denied its canonicity. And still to these days many think that its writer was not the Apostle Peter himself, but one of his followers who thought that he had the right to write in the name of St. Peter, because what he wrote was imbued with his spirit. The Fathers of our Syrian Church did not join this epistle to the canonical Books of the New Testament in the Pshitta the Syriac translation³². For as the canonicity of any book of the Scriptures it does not depend on the identity of the writer, but on its significance, the reason for which the churches accepted it and were esteemed among the canonical Scriptures.

³⁰ Al-Khareeda Al-Nafeesa P 42

³¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, The Chronicles, Vol.3, Ch 3. Also the Guide of the Seekers to the Valuable Holy Bible. Beirut 1937, P.268.

³² See Lamps for the way, the Author, Damascus 1984, and P.180.

But the "Acts of Peter" and the "Gospel of Peter" and the Epistle to Ecllymentos and the "Revelation" and others are Apocryphal books, that is, non canonical and unaccepted by the Church.



